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## Literacy Statistics

**2/3**

**of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of the 4th grade will end up in jail or on welfare.**

*The 4th grade is the watershed year. We can predict that if a child is not reading proficiently in the 4th grade, he or she will have approximately a 78 percent chance of not catching up.*

According to the literacy fast facts from the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), literacy is defined as "using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential."

"One measure of literacy is the percentage of adults who perform at four achievement levels: Below Basic, Basic, Intermediate, and Proficient. In each type of literacy, 13 percent of adults were at or above Proficient (indicating they possess the skills necessary to perform complex and challenging literacy activities) in 2003. Twenty-two percent of adults were Below Basic (indicating they possess no more than the most simple and concrete literacy skills) in quantitative literacy, compared with 14 percent in prose literacy and 12 percent in document literacy."

### Literacy statistics worldwide

- According to UNICEF, "Nearly a billion people will enter the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names and two thirds of them are women."

### Literacy statistics and juvenile court

- 85 percent of all juveniles who interface with the juvenile court system are functionally illiterate.
- More than 60 percent of all prison inmates are functionally illiterate.
- Penal institution records show that inmates have a 16% chance of returning to prison if they receive literacy help, as opposed to 70% who receive no help. This equates to taxpayer costs of \$25,000 per year per inmate and nearly double that amount for juvenile offenders.
- Illiteracy and crime are closely related. The Department of Justice states, "The link between academic failure and delinquency, violence, and crime is *welded to reading failure*." Over 70% of inmates in America's prisons cannot read above a fourth grade level.

### Many of the USA ills are directly related to illiteracy. Just a few statistics:

- Literacy is learned. Illiteracy is passed along by parents who cannot read or write.
- One child in four grows up not knowing how to read.
- 43% of adults at *Level 1* literacy skills live in poverty compared to only 4% of those at *Level 5*
- 3 out of 4 food stamp recipients perform in the lowest 2 literacy levels
- 90% of welfare recipients are high school dropouts
- 16 to 19 year old girls at the poverty level and below, with below average skills, are 6 times more likely to have out-of-wedlock children than their reading counterparts.
- Low literary costs \$73 million per year in terms of direct health care costs. A recent study by

Pfizer put the cost much higher.

### Teaching reading skills is one of the best ways to save an aging brain

"Carlson is running a study called the Experience Corps Trial, in which older men and women volunteer to teach reading skills to kindergarten through third graders in Baltimore city schools. Using brain-imaging studies, Carlson and her colleagues have shown that after just a few months, people who volunteer show beneficial changes in their brains similar to those that other research teams have seen with exercise."

Experts reveal best ways to save an aging brain



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